

EARLY HEAD START TIP SHEET

No. 14

May EHS programs include non-EHS families in socialization and parent activities?

Response:

The primary focus of socialization and parent activities is, of course, for EHS children and families. Programs may choose to include non-Head Start families in socialization and parent activities for a variety of reasons. Programs in rural areas may be more apt to open up socializations to non-EHS families as a way to increase participation and reduce isolation for families.

Socialization and parent activities provide opportunities for families to network amongst themselves as well as receive support with and education on child development strategies and health and safety issues.

EHS socializations in the home-based option however, have a distinctly different purpose than preschool Head Start socializations. With infants and toddlers, the intent is to support child development by strengthening the relationship between the parent and child versus the focus on enhancing relationships that preschool children are building with their peers. Parents of very young children also benefit from attending socializations. Many appreciate the opportunity of being with other parents where they can safely share the trials and tribulations of caring for infants and toddlers. They gain support and enhance their knowledge via such camaraderie.

When socialization and parent activities are available to a community broader than EHS, it is important that both program staff and participants understand the purpose of the events, the benefits for all participants and the community, as well as the protocols ensuring that all participants remain healthy and safe. Not only do the families benefit when this happens, but the larger community in which the families live are included and supported, leading to building of communities.

Considerations:

- Why is the program opening the group socialization and parent activities to non-EHS families?
- What criteria is the program using when selecting non-EHS families to participate in these activities?
- What are the impacts regarding liability, insurance, and budget for the program to include non-EHS families in these activities?
- What is the program's procedure for ensuring that all participating families follow the health and safety procedures?

- How does the program ensure that the group size for the socialization is reasonable and developmentally appropriate?
- How do they assess the reasons why EHS families are (or are not) participating in the activities? How does the program ensure that EHS families primarily utilize the activities?
- How does the program assess how the socialization activity benefits all of the families involved? How does the community benefit?

Performance Standards, Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations:

- 1306.33(a)(2) Grantees implementing a home-based program option must provide, at a minimum, two group socialization and parent activities per month for each child (a minimum of 16 group socialization and parent activities a year).
- 1306.33(c)(1)&(2) Group socialization and parent activities must be focused on both the children and parents. They may not be conducted by the home visitor with baby-sitters or other temporary caregivers.
 - (1) The purpose of these socialization and parent activities for the children is to emphasize peer group interaction through age appropriate activities in a Head Start classroom, community facility, home or on a field trip. The children are to be supervised by the home visitor with parents observing at times and actively participating at other times.
 - (2) These activities must be designed so that parents are expected to accompany their children to the group socialization and parent activities at least twice each month to observe, to participate as volunteers or to engage in activities designed specifically for the parents.

Resources:

Department of Health and Human Services (2001) **Child Development Services During Home Visits and Socializations in Early Head Start Home-Based Program Options.** Booklet form of ACYF-IM-HS-OO-22.

(2001) *Early Head Start Program Strategies: Socializations for Infants and Toddlers in the Early Head Start Home-Based Program Option.* Early Head Start National Resource Center @ ZERO TO THREE: Washington, DC.

Jerald, J; Siegel, W; & Semlak, S. (October 2000) *Socializations For Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families in the Home-Based Option.* Head Start Bulletin, Issue No. 69

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The Tip Sheet is not a regulatory document and is for internal use only. Its intent is to provide a basis for dialogue and problem solving among Regional Offices and grantees.